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I. W. K

A POSITION CONCERNING PERSECUTION.

by Mr Tomlinson

That Religion that perſecutes *a Righteous People for their Conſcience towards God, is not worthy to be joyned to, but to be had in Abomination by all ſober People, as a Religion abhorred of God, and of all that truly know him.*

This is manifeſt by that which follows.

1. FIrſt, Its Pedigree or Race is thereby made manifeſt to be of the Evil one, and of affinity with *Cain*, and the perſecuting Phariſees. *Cain* was the firſt of that Race that ſlew his Brother about Religion: and *wherefore ſlew he him?* even *becauſe his own works were evil, and his Brothers righteous*, ſaith the Scripture, 1 *Joh.* 3. 12. And even ſo it is now; The perſecuting ſpirit ſeeks to ſlay a People more righteous than it ſelf. So it hath been, ſo it is, and ſo it will be, as long as that ſpirit is permitted to act its part: and when it hath done, it muſt be turned out with its firſt father *Cain*, and be a vagabond from the Lord, and from the off-ſpring of his People. Therefore conſider and fear, all ye that are tainted therewith.

The Phariſees, they gave place in themſelves to the ſame ſpirit, under a pretence of Zeal and Holineſs, as if by perſecuting they would root out abominable Doctrines and Hereſies contrary to Godlineſs, and contrary to eſtabliſhed Traditions, delivered them of God, and his holy Prophets: But they perceived not in themſelves that rotten root of enmity from whence this ſpirit ſprang, and was influenced and ſtirred up: And therefore inſtead of rooting out what they would have rooted out, they rooted out themſelves, out of the Inheritance of God, and cut off their Names from being the Diſciples of Chriſt. And as it was with them, ſo will it be with all that follow them, in the ſame ſpirit of Perſecution: And a ſhort time will henceforth manifeſt it. The Phariſees thought to preſerve themſelves by rooting out and ſuppreſſing others, but the Wiſdom of God turned it quite otherwiſe. They ſaid, If we let them alone, all men will believe on this man, and joyn to him, and the *Romans* will come and take away our place and Nation: therefore they thought *Perſecution* was the way to prevent that. But mark the Counſel and Wiſdom of God: That way which they took to prevent their ruine and ſcattering, even that thing provoked the Lord to ſend the *Romans* to take away their place and Nation. And ſo that which they feared came upon them, becauſe they would not ſuffer the innocent Seed, nor imbrace it as the off-ſpring of God. And theſe things were written for examples to them that come after them; that they may be wiſe by others falls; and may learn to kiſs the Son, and his little ones, leſt he be angry, and they periſh out of the way, when his wrath is but a little kindled, *Pſal.* 2.

2. Conſider that this Spirit that perſecutes, be it in whom it will, it's but of the fleſh, not of the Spirit of the Lord: for ſo the Scripture witneſſeth, *Gal.*4. 29. *But as it was then, he that was born after the fleſh perſecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even ſo it is now. But*, (mark the event!) *What ſaith the Scripture?* (that whereof one tittle ſhall not fail till all be fulfilled) *Caſt out the Bond-woman and her ſon*, (that is, he that is born after the fleſh and perſecutes) *for the ſon of the Bond-woman ſhall not be heir with the ſon of the Free-woman.* Mark! The portion of this Spirit that perſecutes is to be caſt out; it ſhall not be Heir with Chriſt in his Kingdom.

3. Again, The Root of this Perſecuting ſpirit is in that evil one which is called *Apollyon*, not in the ſaving Spirit which hath its name *JESUS*. *Apollyon*, is Deſtroyer, (*Rev.*9.11.) the Spirit hath given that name to that nature; as he hath given the name *Saviour* or *Jeſus* to the contrary nature. *Thou ſhalt call his name JESUS, for he ſhall ſave, &c.* And ſaith he, *The Son of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave.* Therefore the Deſtroyer can find no place in him, he hath no root nor foundation there; but

the Persecutors Root, from whence he springs, is in *Apollyon*, that spirit that is contrary to *Jesus*, and shall go into Perdition.

4. The Persecutors of the Innocent for Conscience-sake, have not the knowledge of God and of Christ. *Joh.* 16. 3. *These things will they do unto you, because they know not the Father nor me.* The reason why men persecute, is, because they are ignorant of God. And their Persecution of others, is a manifest demonstration of their ignorance of God. He that knows all mens hearts, and comprehends all their knowledge, hath spoken it. A prate or talk of God and his Attributes, he accounts not the knowledge of God: for so, many Persecutors can talk largely enough. But he that knows the Father and the Son, is by that knowledge (according to the measure of it) sunk into the Nature of him known; and his Image renewing thereby, will appear in that person that knows him. For the knowledge of God is not a dead fruitless knowledge; but it's *Life eternal*, and raises up life in man, that he begins to live in the Image of God, whom now he begins to see and know. As he sees God, who is Light, so he begins to walk in the Light, and becomes a Child of Light, not of darkness: As he sees God, who is Love, and feels him so; so he receives the Image of his Nature by Impression upon his spirit, from that Spirit of God that gives the knowledge of God; and so he begins to live in that Nature also: and now being come to the feeling of the true Love, and beginning to spring up in that (which indeed is the true knowledge of God who is Love) he will now do no harm to his Neighbour: Persecution now ceaseth in him, being slain from the right ground, even from his knowing & feeling what God is: But while this persecuting spirit remains in any unslain and unsubdued, its an evident token that they are not yet come to the true Knowledge of God, and of Christ, how highly soever they account of themselves, or are accounted of by others, for Christianity; he that denies this, must oppose the Words of the Son of God, who came to set Truth in the Earth: and wo will be to him that is found in the gainsaying of the Truth that he witnessed from the Father. So then, all Persecutors being destitute of the Knowledge of the Father and the Son, what Religion can they set up, but a persecuting Religion, which hath not the Knowledge of God and of Christ in it?

Therefore let all that joyn themselves to Persecutors, consider to whom they joyn themselves; It's not to God, but to his enemies, that know Him not, nor his Children, though they think they do God service in persecuting.

5. Again, Persecutors do not stand in wholsome counsel, as among men. *Gamaliel* will rise up in Judgement against them; He was a wise Counsellor; and he gave this counsel in his time; *Let these men alone: if their way be of men, it will come to nought; But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it*; and

beſides this, *leſt perhaps ye be found fighters againſt God.* Mark! here's a fruitleſs work, and a dangerous work: fruitleſs in that they cannot overthrow it: and dangerous in that they run a hazzard of fighting againſt God, while they ſeek to overthrow. So much *Gamaliel* could warn them of. But mark what was ſaid to *Saul*, and you will ſee further, that *Perſecution* of the *Innocent* is beyond all *Perhaps*, and is poſſitively a fighting againſt God, and no leſs than the perſecuting of Chriſt himſelf; *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* You ſee *Saul* was fighting againſt God, and wiſt it not. Therefore be warned, all ye that perſecute the *Innocent* for their Conſcience toward God.

6. *Perſecutors* and *Rooters out* even of the *Tares*, ſtand in direct oppoſition and defiance to the Command of Chriſt; for he hath ſaid, **Let alone.** This very Queſtion of *Rooting out*, is plainly and punctually propounded, and reſolved by him under the Parable of the Tares, *Mat.*13.28,29. *Shall we gather out the Tares*, ſay the Servants? *No*, ſaith Chriſt, *Let alone:* And he hath given the Reaſon alſo, ſufficient to ſatisfie any rational man; *Leſt ye pluck up therewith Wheat:* Rather than any Wheat be pluckt up, he will have the Tares to grow with it, until the Harveſt. And he hath told us, whoſe office that ſhall be to gather out the Tares, and when, *verſ.* 40,41. What can be more punctual?

Therefore none can attempt that work without open preſumption and defiance to his Command: The Son of Man, who is the ſower of the good Seed, knew that the Tares could not be gathered out without danger to the good Seed; therefore he hath not permitted it to be done, for the good Seeds ſake. Now this is the beſt pretence that Perſecutors can have for themſelves, namely, To purge the Church from the Tares that would infeſt the Wheat: But Chriſt himſelf hath ſtript them of this ſhelter; and hath put a bar to this work, for the good Seeds ſake: and indeed it is the good Seed commonly that Perſecutors fall upon: Tares are but a pretence, and that a rotten one too, ſeeing Chriſt hath forbidden that. Now, if they fall upon that which the Son of Man, the Seeds-man, hath ſuch care of, conſider how acceptable will this be to Him that hath ſo expreſſed his care of the Wheat: will not his Anger be kindled? Yes ſurely; for if his Anger may be expected for not kiſſing the Son, *Pſal.*2. much more for going about to kill the Son, and to deſtroy Him.

The former Powers were told the danger of theſe things, but they not regarding, but falling upon this Stone, have daſhed themſelves to pieces: and ſo muſt all that follow the ſame ſteps; for the Scriptures ſhall be fulfilled.

7. *He that hates his Brother, is a Murtherer; and no Murtherer hath eternal Life abiding in him,* 1 John 3.15. Here is the heighth of wickedneſs, that

that which God will not ſuffer to go unrevenged, namely, *Murther*: He that hates his Brother ſtands in it; he ſtands a Murtherer before the Lord; and is ſo pronounced here by his Servant: for the root of Murther is alive in him in hating his Brother. If the Perſecutor of the Righteous ſay, he loves his Brother whom he perſecutes, he is alſo a Lyar as well as a Murtherer; For, *Love doth no ill to his Neighbour*, but teaches to *do to him, as we would it ſhould be done to us.* And therefore our Lord and Maſter, Chriſt Jeſus, the innocent Lamb of God, and our Leader, charged home theſe two things upon the Phariſees, his Perſecutors, who ſought his deſtruction, and told them, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the luſts of your Father ye are willing to do: He was a Murtherer from the beginning, and ſtood not in the Truth, becauſe there is no truth in him: When he ſpeaketh a lye, he ſpeaketh of his own; for he is a Lyar, and the Father thereof.*

Conſider therefore all ye that perſecute the *Innocent*, and would cover it with a lye, as the Phariſees would have done, who went before you in that nature; I ſay, let it enter into your hearts, to take notice how you ſtand before the Lord, that you are already pronounced Murtherers in hating your Brother; and fear the powerful hand of the Lord, and repent of the thoughts of your hearts againſt the *Innocent*; *For he that toucheth an innocent perſon, toucheth the Apple of God's Eye:* Let your hatred be turned into Love, and imbrace the Son in his Servants that fear Him, leſt his Anger be kindled againſt you, and ye periſh out of his way, as others have done.

8. This is the great Character of the great Whore, namely to deſtroy and drink the *Blood* of the Servants of the Lord: *In her is found Blood*, &c. And therefore the nearer that any come to this, the more they partake with the great Whore in her Sins; and the more they ſhall partake with her in her Plagues.

9. *Perſecutors* of the *Innocent* for Conſcience ſake, are uſurpers of God's Throne and Prerogative; for God requireth that the Conſcience be ſubjected unto Him; and he hath not given that Prerogative to any man or men upon Earth, to have the Conſciences of men ſubjected to them ſingly, but only wherein his Authority binds them: and in matter of Worſhip, it's plain that his Authority hath ſet free all men from the Traditions of men. In vain therefore is that worſhip that hath no better a foundation than man's commanding of it. *In vain*, ſaith Chriſt (uſing the words of the Prophet) *do ye worſhip me, teaching for Doctrines the Precepts of men.*

Therefore in this point our Liberty by Chriſt is proclaimed, and we ought to ſtand faſt in it: and he that requires the contrary, ſtands oppoſite to Chriſt and his Work; forceth men to that which Chriſt hath proclaimed to be vain worſhip; and alſo is an uſurper of God's Prerogative, in ſeeking to have the Conſciences of men ſubjected unto him: And let all ſuch uſurpers

of God's Throne and Prerogative, consider, that God will not give his Glory to another; but he will assuredly throw them out of his Throne, as a stone out of a sling; and He will redeem the Consciences of his People out of the hands of all such; for these are redeeming times; and the time draws on that the holy Apostles of the Lamb long ago had an eye after groaning in themselves, and waiting for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of our Body: And there is something of this secretly stamped upon the hearts of men; even to look after better things, a better Kingdom, better times; though they put this far off from themselves in the particular; for that noble spark of God in man, though it be imbondaged it self in man, yet hath in it a groaning after liberty, yea, *after the liberty of the Sons of God*. There hath been a time, and that a long time, granted to the *Man of Sin*, the *Son of Perdition*, to sit in the Temple of God, over the Throne of God, for the punishing of all them that love unrighteousness; and strong delusions have been sent upon them to enslave their Consciences (their most noble part) unto men, because they loved not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; and so Antichrists kingdom is full of slaves: but that time is wearing out, and passing over; and God will turn his hand against that proud Spirit that durst usurp his Throne, and Prerogative over mens Consciences, in imposing the matters of his Worship upon them, without his command, after their own inventions and traditions, for the fulfilling of their own lusts, and earthly ends, and advantages. When the King of *Assyria* had done God's scourging work upon Israel, then the Lord takes notice of the proud heart of the King of *Assyria* in that work, and calls him to an account for helping forward the affliction, though upon a people that had transgressed: how much more will he do it for a people that subject their Consciences in his Worship and Service singly to him, and walk inoffensively and harmlesly among men in their generation?

The Apostles of Christ Jesus, they durst not challenge power over mens Faith and Conscience, in imposing upon them what the Spirit commanded not; which thing of right had belonged to them, if to any, the Conscience and Faith being that which their work was exercised about. Therefore for them to look for it, whose work is to regulate the civil life of men, and to bear the Sword for Transgressors, to keep them in peace, that they may not destroy one another, not the Righteous, this is an usurpation which the Apostles durst not challenge to themselves.

10. Again, *Persecution* argues a want of Truth on that part that persecutes: For wherefore do they fly to carnal weapons (such as the Apostles never used to subdue errour with) and lay aside spiritual Weapons, such as the Apostles did use, and appointed to be used, for the stopping of the mouths of gainsayers? Is it not because they distrust their own weapons, or find them-

themſelves foiled, and not ſufficiently defended by them, and therefore fly to Clubs, and Stocks, and Priſons, and Fines, and Traps, and Snares, and ſuch like carnal weapons, for help? and ſo inſtead of laying their ſpiritual weapon to the Conſcience, they uſe carnal weapons againſt the body and life, and outward being of people, and diſturb and diſquiet their outward life.

11. Therefore, laſtly, conſider the end of Perſecutors: They put the Innocent to trouble, therefore *it is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them again.* God is pleaſed, now and then to give manifeſt examples of his Juſtice upon perſons that wrong and harm others; to let the Earth ſee, that there is a Revenger of Wrongs, that takes notice: and this he doth often for one wicked man againſt another: how much more then will he avenge the Cauſe of the Innocent, whom the World hath nothing againſt (becauſe their lives are honeſt and unblameable) but onely create Accuſations and Traps againſt them in the matters of their God? as *Nebuchadnezzars* Princes and Counſellors did againſt *Daniel.* I tell you he will avenge them ſpeedily, ſaith Chriſt Jeſus. Shall they ſubject their Conſciences to God alone, to be guided and directed by him, and ſhall they be enſnared and trapped by men for ſo doing, and will not God avenge them? Yes ſurely, Their Judgment ſlumbers not, who ſhall ſo abuſe the Heritage of God, and uſurp his Throne, to ſit upon the Conſciences of his Servants. For conſider, if it ſhall be imputed as ſo great a crime againſt men, *I was naked, and ye cloathed me not; I was hungry, and ye fed me not; a ſtranger, and ye took me not in; ſick, and in Priſon, and ye viſited me not:* If that will be accounted ſo great a crime; what will be ſaid then to them that rob them of their Apparrel, meat, drink, health, liberty? of whom it may be ſaid, I had meat for my ſelf and Family, but you took it out of their mouthes; I had apparrel, but you robbed me of it; I had a habitation, but you caſt me out of it; I had health and liberty, but you caſt me into Priſons and holes, and robbed me of both: *for in as much as ye did it to one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye did it unto me.* If the other ſhall be taken notice of that did not help in time of need, what ſhall be ſaid to theſe who did ſuch injuries and wrongs to the leaſt of the Servants of the Lord! It is worthy of your moſt ſerious thoughts to ponder it, all ye that would be rooting out, who have not minded the Premonition of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to the contrary.

Theſe things are written in love to the Righteous, who ſuffer Perſecution; and in love to the Unrighteous who do perſecute, that (if the Lord pleaſe to give you an ear) you may be kept from that great and deſolating wickedneſs, which often immediately foreruns a Peoples deſtruction. It

was the topping up of *Israels* sins when they were led captive into *Babylon*. It was the topping up of the sins of the *Jews* also, when their Nation was left unto them desolate, after the dayes of Christ. It almost ruined the *Papists* in *England*, even their Persecution in the dayes of Queen *Mary*. And whether it was not the ground of the late long Wars in *England*, let wise men consider: As also, whether it was not the desolating of that People that had been made successful in the Wars, by the immediate hand and strength of God, beyond their own prudence and visible power many times, as most parties have acknowledged. And now, if it be kept on foot still, whether it may not presage Ruine and Desolation to them that continue therein?

And it is to be minded by all, That No Law of man, or other pretence, will excuse any man in this matter. *He that partakes in* Babylons *sins*, (whereof this is none of the least) *may expect to partake of* Babylons *plagues*. And all are guilty, as partakers, from the most violent actor in Persecution, to him that stands by and consents thereto in his heart. *Paul* charged that against himself, that he stood by and consented to the death of *Stephen*. To be angry with our Brother without a cause, Christ brings within the Law of Murder; how much more to persecute him without a cause will make one guilty?

Let these things be weighed in all you that have any regard of God or man in your hearts, and let all bitterness and wrath and hatred be repented of, and be cast out; and let the Love of God arise in your hearts towards one another, to preserve the outward life of one another, as God doth yours, lest the measure ye mete to others be measured to you again.

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THE END.